

CONVENTION ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN ENDANGERED SPECIES
OF WILD FAUNA AND FLORA

Amendments to Appendices I and II of CITES

Twelfth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties

Santiago (Chile), November 3-15, 2002

A. PROPOSAL

Inclusion of *Mauremys mutica* in Appendix II in accordance with Article II 2(a) of the Convention, and satisfying Resolution Conf. 9.24, Annex 2a, Criteria A and Bi).

B. PROPONENT

People's Republic of China and United States of America, in accordance with the consensus recommendation of the CITES-sponsored Technical Workshop on Conservation of and Trade in Freshwater Turtles and Tortoises in Asia held in Kunming, China in March 2002.

C. SUPPORTING STATEMENT

1.1 Taxonomy

1.1.1 Class: Reptilia

1.2 Order: Testudines

1.3 Family: Bataguridae

1.4 Species: *Mauremys mutica* (Cantor, 1842)

Subspecies: 1 subspecies has been described: *M. m. kami* Yasukawa, Ota, and Iverson 1996.

1.5 Scientific synonyms: *Emys muticus*
Clemmys mutica

1.6 Common names:

English: Yellow Pond Turtle

Spanish: ?

French: ?

1.7 Code Numbers:

2. Biological Parameters

2.1 Distribution:

Mauremys mutica is found in China, Chinese Taipei, Japan, and Vietnam. China: This species is widespread in central and southern China, including Yunnan, Hubei, Anhui, Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Jiangxi, Hunan, Fujian, Guangdong, Guangxi, and Hainan provinces (Lau and Shi, 2000). Chinese Taipei: This species is found mainly in still water bodies such as old ponds, lakes, drainage ditches, rice paddies, occasionally far from aquatic habitats, and in some remote montane ponds in low densities mostly in the central and northern parts of Chinese Taipei (Chen et al., 2000). It occurs in somewhat scattered and small populations due to stress associated with human disturbance (Chen et al., 2000). Hong Kong Special Administrative Region: This species is known from several locations in the Hong Kong

Special Administrative Region (Hong Kong SAR), but the few specimens found thus far are almost certainly released animals (Lau et al., 2000). Japan: There is a small population of yellow Pond Turtles in Japan (van Dijk, 2002). Vietnam: The Yellow Pond Turtle is found in marshes, ponds, and slow moving streams in the lowland regions of northern and north-central Vietnam (Hendrie, 2000).

2.2 Habitat availability:

China: *M. mutica* lives in water bodies in basins and rivers and there are still many suitable habitats left in China (Lau and Shi, 2000). Chinese Taipei: There has been rapid reduction in suitable habitat in Chinese Taipei (Chen et al., 2000). Japan: There is no information on habitat availability for this species in Japan. Vietnam: Habitat availability for *M. mutica* is unknown but there is reduced habitat resulting from the agricultural conversion of wetlands and marshes (Hendrie, 2000).

2.3 Population status:

China: The Yellow Pond Turtle is considered endangered in China (Zhao, 1998 cited in Lau and Shi, 2000). Chinese Taipei: *M. mutica* is considered a rare and valuable species in Chinese Taipei (Chen et al., 2000). Japan: This species is considered Vulnerable in southern Ryukyus, Japan (Yasukawa et al., in press as cited in Rhodin, 2002). Vietnam: This species is considered endangered in Vietnam (Rhodin, 2002).

2.4 Population trends:

China: Once one of the commonest turtles for sale in the Chinese food market, *M. mutica* has become uncommon in recent years indicating substantial declines in the wild populations (Lau and Shi, 2000). Chinese Taipei: Few studies have been carried out on the current status of this turtle but it is probable that populations have been dramatically declining due to rapid reductions in suitable habitat in Chinese Taipei (Chen et al., 2000). Japan: No information was available on the population trends of *M. mutica* in Japan. Vietnam: Population trends for the Yellow Pond Turtle are unknown but it is likely to be in decline due to hunting and habitat loss (Hendrie, 2000). There has been a decline observed recently in market supply of this species (B. Chan, R. Kan, M. Lau, pers. comm. as cited in Rhodin, 2002).

2.5 Geographic trends:

No information was available on the geographic trends of this species from any of the range countries.

2.6 Role of the species in its ecosystem:

The Yellow Pond Turtle is omnivorous and known to feed on various plant and animal materials including roots, shoots of plants, aquatic invertebrates such as insects, sewage worms, and leeches (Chen et al., 2000).

2.7 Threats:

China: The main threat to the Yellow Pond Turtle is over-collecting for the food trade, urbanization, water pollution, and the increased use of fertilizers and pesticides that cause habitat destruction and degradation (Lau and Shi, 2000). Chinese Taipei: Rapid population

growth, habitat loss and fragmentation, and water pollution are threats to most of the freshwater turtles in Chinese Taipei (Chen et al., 2000). Although the Yellow Pond Turtle is protected through legislation, the laws are not enforced effectively in the field and exploitation of turtles still occurs in considerable numbers (Chen et al., 2000). Japan: No information was available on threats to this species in Japan. Vietnam: Threats to *M. mutica* are from collection and habitat loss (Hendrie, 2000).

3. Utilization and Trade

3.1 National utilization:

China: *M. mutica* has been recorded in food trade in China (Lau and Shi, 2000), and the food and pet trade in Hong Kong SAR (Lau et al., 2000). Additionally, in Hong Kong SAR, the plastron of *M. mutica* is commonly used in preparing turtle jelly (Lau et al., 2000). Chinese Taipei: In Chinese Taipei, turtle shells are heavily used as an important ingredient in traditional medicines with a small portion of this shell is supplied from domestic sources (Chen et al., 2000). Japan: No information on the national utilization of the Yellow Pond Turtle was available for Japan. Vietnam: *M. mutica* might have been hunted for local consumption in the past but today, it is likely that turtles encountered are sold to traders (Hendrie, 2000).

3.2 Legal international trade:

China: The Yellow Pond Turtle is one of eight Asian species that were consistently present in the food trade (Lau et al., 2000). Japan: No information was available for *M. mutica* in Japan. Chinese Taipei: In Chinese Taipei, *M. mutica* is designated as a Rare and Valuable Species under the Wildlife Conservation Law (van Dijk, 2002) and commercial trade of wild-caught turtles is prohibited (Chen et al., 2000). Vietnam: No *M. mutica* were legally exported between 1994 and 1999 according to official CITES office records (Hendrie, 2000).

3.3 Illegal trade:

China: Many CITES-listed species have been observed in south China food markets; it is most likely that these were imported into China illegally, particularly Appendix-I species such as *Batagur baska* (Lau and Shi, 2000). Many non-CITES species in Chinese food markets have likely also been imported illegally, attesting to the documented illegal exports from other countries such as Myanmar and Vietnam. Chinese Taipei: Trade of wild turtles is still common and left unregulated in Chinese Taipei due to a lack of staff and trained enforcement officers (Chen et al., 2000). *M. mutica* has been recorded in turtle markets in Chinese Taipei (Rhodin, 2002). Japan: No information on illegal trade of this species in Japan was available. Vietnam: Hendrie (2000) observed this species in the wildlife trade on a few occasions and there has been only one observation of *M. mutica* in the Hanoi domestic pet market.

3.4 Actual or potential trade impacts:

China: If the burgeoning trade is left uncontrolled, it will pose negative impacts on the populations of turtles in China and Southeast Asia (Chen et al., 2000). Chinese Taipei: Most of the native turtles in Chinese Taipei are facing an uncertain future (Chen et al., 2000). Japan: No information was available on trade impacts to the Yellow Pond Turtle in Japan. Vietnam: Potential trade impacts to *M. mutica* include extirpation of wild populations and the

comprised viability of surviving populations (Hendrie, 2000).

3.5 Captive breeding or artificial propagation for commercial purposes (outside country of origin):

China: There is a trend for the importation of captive-bred species, including *M. mutica*, which has the potential to meet the demand from the pet trade but is far from adequate to satisfy the demands of the food trade (Lau et al., 2000).

4. Conservation and Management

4.1 Legal status:

4.1.1 National:

China: Several freshwater turtles and tortoises are listed in the People's Republic of China Wild Animals Protection Law as state major protected wildlife grade I, while others are grade II protected (van Dijk, 2002). However, the Yellow Pond Turtle is neither grade I or grade II. The Wild Animals Protection Law also covers important economic and scientific species, though the actual species are not listed. For terrestrial species, the State Forestry Administration is responsible for the administering and enforcing of this law, while the Fisheries Ministry is responsible for the aquatic species (van Dijk, 2002). The collecting of state major protected species is only allowed for scientific research, captive breeding, exhibition and other special reasons. Permission from the Forestry or Fisheries bureau in the central government is needed for the collecting of grade I protected species; permission from the Forestry or Fisheries Department in the provincial government is required for grade II protected species (van Dijk, 2002). The transport of state major protected species across county boundary needs the permission from the provincial Forestry or Fisheries Department. The import and export of these state major protected species and CITES-listed species need the permission from the Forestry or Fisheries bureau in the central government and a certificate issued by the Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora Import and Export Administrative Office (Shi and Lau, 2000 cited in van Dijk, 2002)). Regarding imports and exports of turtles, China has tightened regulations considerably in recent years (van Dijk, 2002). Notice of Strengthening the Live Reptile Import and Export Management (China CITES Authority No.[2000] 51) was issued by the State Endangered Species Import and Export Administration Office in June 2000 (van Dijk, 2002). This was augmented by Notice of Strengthening the Trade Management on Turtles and Tortoises, issued by the State Endangered Species Import and Export Administration Office on June, 17, 2001 (van Dijk, 2002). Under these Notifications, commercial imports of turtle species listed on Appendix II of CITES are only accepted from Parties that set an annual export quota, all commercial imports of all turtles from Indonesia, Cambodia and Thailand are suspended, all imports of turtles into China need to be accompanied by export permits or certificates from the exporting country, turtle imports are restricted to a small number of designated airports, and local wildlife authorities are instructed to co-operate closely with customs authorities (van Dijk, 2002).

Chinese Taipei: In Chinese Taipei, *Mauremys mutica* is designated as a Rare and Valuable Species under the Wildlife Conservation Law (van Dijk, 2002). The Division of Conservation, Council of Agriculture, is the authority responsible for

implementing this law (Chen et al., 2000).

Japan: There is no detailed information currently available on the legal protection status of *Mauremys mutica* (van dijk, 2002). Japan has been a Party to CITES since 1980.

Vietnam: Ministerial decree No 18 of the Council of Ministers Stipulating the Categories of rare and precious forest fauna and flora, and their management and protection, dated 17 January 1992, includes two species of non-marine turtles, *Indotestudo elongata* and *Pelochelys bibroni* (= *P. cantorii*), under category II. Thus utilisation of these two species is restricted to scientific research, establishing breeding populations, and international exchange. Any such activities require a collection permit from the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (Hendrie, 2000). The list of species protected by Decree 18 is currently under review and more turtle species may be included. Directive 359 (1996) restricts trade in wildlife and animal parts, including prohibiting the sale of wildlife in restaurants. Commerce and trade regulations require a permit issued at the provincial level for trade in any commodity, including wildlife (Hendrie, 2000). Circular 62/2001/TT-BNN issued on 05 of June 2001 by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development to guide imports and exports of goods and commodities managed by the Ministry for the period of 2001-2005 stipulates that Vietnam prohibits exports of all wild animals and rare and precious plants. Thus export of all native turtle species is prohibited. Vietnam became a Party to CITES in 1994.

3.1.2 International:

The Yellow Pond Turtle is not currently listed in the CITES appendices.

4.2 Species management:

4.2.1 Population monitoring:

No specific population monitoring programs for this species, or for Asian freshwater turtles in general, have been identified.

4.2.2 Habitat conservation:

Chinese Taipei: In Chinese Taipei, there are various kinds of protected areas that have been designated under local or central laws but only limited areas cover the critical habitats of freshwater turtles, especially for aquatic species (Chen et al., 2000). Vietnam: There are 11 National Parks and 91 Protected Areas designated in Vietnam which cover 13,425 km² or 4.1% of the country (MacKinnon, 1997 as cited in Hendrie, 2000).

4.2.3 Management measures:

Vietnam: A Turtle Conservation and Ecology Project was established in 1998 by the Cuc Phong National Park and the Forest Protection Department that was aimed at receiving and translocating turtles confiscated from the wildlife trade, conducting research, public education, and training of regional authorities (Hendrie, 2000).

4.3 Control measures:

3.2.1 International trade:

China: China has recently taken several legal/regulatory measures to control imports and exports of freshwater turtles (see Section 4.1.1). Vietnam: Vietnam recently adopted CITES-implementing legislation, which should help control international trade.

4.3.2 Domestic measures:

Vietnam: The National Forest Protection Department is increasing enforcement activities on the ground and investing in the training of its rangers however, the process is slow and unlikely to achieve the results that are needed to meet the threat posed by the illegal wildlife trade (Hendrie, 2000).

5. Information on Similar Species

No information was available on similar species.

6. Other Comments

The species' status on the IUCN 2000 Red List is: Endangered (A1cd+2cd).

All range countries were consulted by mail regarding this proposal.

The consensus recommendation from the CITES-sponsored Technical Workshop on Conservation of and Trade in Freshwater Turtles and Tortoises, held in Kunming, China from March 25-28, 2002, is that *Mauremys mutica* is one of the 11 highest-priority taxa for an Appendix-II CITES listing at COP 12.

7. Additional Remarks

Anders G. J. Rhodin of the Chelonian Research Foundation has recommended that *Mauremys mutica* be considered for listing in Appendix II.

8. References

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